

NOTE: This memorandum will be published in the *Federal Register* on March 22.

**Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the National PTA Legislative Conference**

*March 14, 1995*

**The President.** Thank you very much, Kathryn. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to be here with you. More importantly, I am delighted to have you here with me. I need all the help I can get. [Laughter] I feel like reinforcements have just arrived.

I want to say, too, a special word of thanks to the PTA for presenting Secretary Riley the PTA Child Advocacy Award tomorrow. He's here with me. And I think he's done a magnificent job. And I thank you for giving him that award.

Such a beautiful sort of premature spring day outside. I almost feel that we should be having recess instead of class. [Laughter] But unfortunately, events compel us to have class, for we are in danger of forgetting some of our most fundamental lessons.

I want to start by thanking a kindergarten class taught by Linda Eddington from Jackson Hole, Wyoming, for the wonderful letters they sent up here with her. I reviewed the letters. I had some favorites. Charlie Wheeler said, "You are a good paper-writer, because you practice." My favorite letter, regrettably, was unsigned, otherwise I would be writing a letter back. It said, "You're one of the best. I never have seen you, but I like your speeches." I am sending to the Congress today a proposal to lower the voting age to 5. [Laughter] We might get better results.

I want to thank the PTA for now nearly 100 years of help to children and to parents and to schools. The PTA has meant a lot to me personally. I have been a member of the PTA—Hillary and I both were active when I was the Governor of Arkansas. Essie used to come sell me my membership every year. [Laughter] And I actually paid and actually—[laughter]. You know how Presidents never carry any money anywhere they go? I brought some money today, because I knew she was going to be here. [Laughter] I did.

I also, besides being an active member of the PTA and spending a lot of time at Chelsea's school, had a chance to work with the PTA for a dozen years in my State and throughout the country as we worked to implement the recommendations of the Nation at Risk Report, starting in '83. And then we worked up to the national education goals in '89. And then, of course, ultimately culminating in my service as President in the last 2 years.

At a time when many of our most important citizenship organizations have been suffering and civic institutions generally are often in decline, the PTA has grown as parents have come back in droves to understanding that they had to do more to make their children's education work and that they had to be involved. PTA embodies the three ideas that I have talked about so much for the future—opportunity, responsibility, and community—what we call the New Covenant.

This is a period of profound change in the life of America and in the lives of Americans. There are many things going on which are wonderful, exhilarating, exciting, and others which are profoundly troubling. The biggest challenges we face on the eve of this new century relate to our economic and social problems, which threaten the middle class economics of the American dream and the mainstream values of work and family and community. We see it everywhere in every community. About half of the American people are making the same or less money than they made 15 years ago. We have an enormous divide opening up within the great American middle class based largely on the level of education. And in spite of the fact that—and I'm very proud of the fact—that we've had an economic recovery that has produced the lowest rates of unemployment and inflation combined in 25 years and 6.1 million new jobs, a whole lot of Americans are still worried about losing theirs or losing the benefits associated with their job, their health care, their retirement, or never getting a raise. And in spite of the progress we are making on many fronts, there is still an awful lot of social turmoil in this country from drugs and violence and gangs and family

breakdown. And these things are profoundly troubling to the American people.

So we have a lot of good news and a lot of bad news. And a whole lot is happening. In 1993 we had the largest number of new businesses started in the United States in any single year in the history of the country. So we're all trying to work through this as a people, as we must. I believe our common mission must be to keep the American dream alive for all of our people as we move into the next century and to make sure our country is still the strongest force for peace and freedom and democracy in the world. To do that, we've got to have a strong economy. We've got to be able to grow the middle class and shrink the under class. We have to support all these wonderful entrepreneurial forces that are bubbling up in our society. We have to dramatically change the way Government works. But our goal must be always, always the same: to make sure that every American has the chance to live up to his or her God-given potential. And that is what the PTA is all about.

Education has always been profoundly important in American life, from the very beginning. Thomas Jefferson talked about it a lot. But it has never been more important to the prosperity and, indeed, to the survival of the America we know and love than it is today, never.

Now, as we move away from the cold war and the industrial age into the post-cold-war era and the information age where most wealth generation is based on knowledge and technology is changing things at a blinding pace, we know that there will be big changes and there must be in the role of Government. There's a huge debate going on here in Washington, which can be seen in almost every issue, about exactly what the role of the Government should be as we move toward the 21st century. On the one side is the largely rejected view that Washington still knows best about everything and that there is a one-size-fits-all big answer to every big problem in the country. On the other side is what you might call the Republican contract view, which is that the Government is the source of all the problems in the country, and if we just had no Government, we'd have no problems, and—unless something is going

on at the State and local level that they don't agree with, in which case they want Federal action. But, basically, that's the argument stated in the most extreme forms.

I believe that the truth is somewhere both in between and way beyond that. I believe we have common problems that require common approaches. I believe we need a Government in Washington that is leaner but not meaner, one that does not pretend to be the savior of the country but does not presume to sit on the sidelines, either, one that, instead, is a partner in working with the American people to increase opportunity while we shrink bureaucracy, to empower people to make the most of their own lives, and to enhance the security of the American people, both here at home on our streets and around the world. I believe that such a Government would promote both opportunity and responsibility. And I believe that such a Government should have clear priorities that put the interests of the American people first, the interests of all the American people.

Now, there are strong feelings on both sides of this debate. And a lot of what is said may be hard to follow. But I think it's important that we keep in mind what is really the issue. The issue is, how are we going to get this country into the 21st century? How are we going to give our children and our grandchildren a chance to live out the unlimited aspirations of the human spirit and to fulfill the traditions of America.

Now, let's look at this thing on an issue-by-issue basis. There is broad agreement that we should cut the size of Government, that we should send more responsibility back to the State and local level, and that we should work more in partnership directly with citizens, with businesses, with other organizations and less in a regulatory Government-knows-best way. There is broad agreement on this. Indeed, we started this movement.

But the question is, how do you implement these challenges, and what does the Government still have to do? For example, I believe we should downsize the Government, but I think we should invest more in education, training, technology, and research. Why? Because I think it's in our interest. It looks to me like walking away from our opportunities to succeed in the global economy and to de-

velop the capacities of all of our people at a time when we have so much diversity in our country and the world is getting smaller, so all this racial and ethnic diversity is a huge advantage to us. At a time when we have people who have phenomenal abilities who live all over the country in tiny, tiny places and big, big cities, to walk away from our common objective of developing their capacities, it seems to me, is not very smart. I just don't think it makes much sense. And I don't think that any theory of what we should or shouldn't be doing should be allowed to obscure the clear obligation we all have to help our people get into the next century. This is about a fight for the future.

Now, let me put it another way. It seems to me like trying to cut back on education right now would be like trying to cut the defense budget in the toughest days of the cold war. Because that's what—our competition for the future, our security now is going to be determined in large measure by whether we can develop the capacities of all of our people to learn for a lifetime. That is it.

For the 12 years before I came here, there was this political tug of war where Government was regularly bashed but the deficit quadrupled and we walked away from our obligations to invest in our future. For the 4 years before I came here, we had the slowest job growth in America since the Great Depression. For 2 years, we have worked very hard here to both create more opportunities and insist on more responsibilities. And we're making progress. The deficit is down. The Federal Government is smaller by over 100,000. We're on our way to the smallest Federal Government since Mr. Kennedy was the President. We have more jobs, more police on the street, more prosperity than when I took office. And we have invested more in our children.

In the last 2 years, we have, I believe, had the best year in terms of legislative advancements for education that we've had in 30 years. And I might say it was done in a largely bipartisan way. We expanded and reformed Head Start. We passed an apprenticeship program for young people who don't go on to 4-year colleges but do want to move into good jobs after high school. We made college loans more affordable and the repayment

terms better for millions and millions of middle class and lower income students. We made a new commitment to help you to get drugs and guns out of our schools and to end the mindless violence that too many of our children still suffer from. And of course, with your help, we passed Goals 2000, something that was very, very important to me and very important to you. And it's a clear example of Government as a partner, not a savior and not on the sidelines.

No one disagrees with the fact that education is largely a State matter when it comes to funding and a local matter when it comes to teaching and learning. But global education and global competition will go hand in hand. There must be some idea in our country of the world-class standards of excellence we need to really meet the challenges of the future.

As Secretary Riley reminded me, when we were Governors working together and the "Nation at Risk" report came out—that's what the name of the report was, and it came out in a Republican administration. It was "A Nation at Risk," not one place here and another place there and not somebody somewhere else. It was "A Nation at Risk." And Goals 2000 responds to that. It sets those standards reflecting the national education goals that were adopted by the Governors in 1989, working with President Bush and the Bush administration, plus a commitment to continuing development of our teachers, plus the very important parental involvement goal that the PTA got in this—[*applause*].

If it was a good idea last year with bipartisan support, it didn't just stop being a good idea because we had one election. We worked for 10 years on this in a bipartisan way. It didn't stop being a good idea because we had an election. That is not what the election was about. It was not about turning our backs on world-class excellence in education and a partnership to make our schools better and the support that you need to succeed in all of your communities. That was not what was going on.

The success we've had in the last 2 years is building on what has been done in the last 10 years. You know, after all, I think it's important to remember that there's been a lot of progress in our schools in the last 10 years.

To hear these folks talk about it, you'd think that it's all gotten worse and only because we had a Department of Education in Washington—ran the whole thing into the ditch. [Laughter] I don't know what they're doing in Idaho today, carrying the burden of the Department of Education around all day long in their schools. [Laughter] That's the kind of talk we've got.

The truth is that kids are staying in school longer, more of them are going to college, math and science performance is up, because we emphasized, we worked on those things. We did it together. Are there a lot of problems? You bet there are. But this country is the most remarkable experiment in diversity of all kinds in all of human history. And we are doing better because we are working together and setting goals and working as partners. And that's what we should continue to do.

Dick Riley in a way has been perfectly suited to be the Secretary of Education at this time. I can't imagine why anybody would want to abolish his job after watching him do it for a couple of years. I'd just like to point out something to the people who say on the other side that the answer to our problems in education is to abolish the Department of Education. I noticed one of the Republican leaders said the other day that they had actually—the Department of Education actually made things worse.

Well, here are the facts. There are fewer people working in the Department of Education today than were working for the Federal Government in education when it was part of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in the seventies. It's an inconvenient fact for the people who want to abolish it.

Here's another interesting fact. Secretary Riley has proposed to end in this present rescission package that we sent up, or in the coming budget, 41 programs and to consolidate 17 others, 58 of the 240 programs in the Department of Education—inconvenient facts for those that are saying that it's terrible and they're throwing money away. It happens to be true.

But we don't agree with what they're trying to do in the House, to cut \$1.7 billion from education, to eliminate all the funds for

the Safe and Drug-Free School program, all the funds at a time when, disturbingly, young people are beginning to use drugs casually again, forgetting that they're dangerous and illegal, when schools still need the funds to help them be literally more secure in difficult areas. They want to eliminate all the funds in that bill for teaching homeless children, all the funds for the parent resource centers, which you know are very important. We're dealing with a lot of parents, folks, who want to do a better job by their kids but need some help and some support from people like you who have been showing up in the PTA for years, some of you for decades. They need it. [Laughter] Well, your kid stays in school. [Laughter] Listen, I got to keep laughing. Otherwise, we'll be in tears thinking about this.

They want to eliminate much of the money for computers and new technologies. The amount they propose to cut from Goals 2000 is equal to all the funds now allocated for poor and rural communities and all the funds necessary to help 4,000 schools raise their academic standards. And they want, of course, to cut back on the school lunch program.

Now, how are we going to cut? Dick Riley found a way to cut 41 programs without doing this. This school lunch program is a mystery to me. Everybody wants to cut funds in the Agriculture Department because the number of farmers is smaller. You know what we did? We finally concluded a world trade agreement so that our competitors would have to cut agricultural subsidies, so we cut agriculture subsidies. And then we realized we had basically an outdated structure in the Agriculture Department. The best line in the '92 Presidential campaign was Ross Perot's line about the employee at the Department of Agriculture who had to go to the psychiatrist because he lost his farmer. [Laughter] Because the number of farmers had gone down.

So what did we do? We closed 1,200 agricultural offices. They want to cut the school lunch program. I think we know how to cut better than they do. I think that's the way to do it.

So let me say again, every effort we had in the last 2 years, from Head Start to ap-

prenticeships, to Goals 2000, to the reformation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, everything we did was done in a bipartisan way. And now, we see education becoming both a partisan and a divisive issue again. We cannot walk away from this. You need to be here. You are the reinforcements for America's future, and I want you to go up there today and say that, say this \$1.7 billion in a \$1.5 trillion budget is a drop in the bucket and it should not be eliminated to pay for \$188 billion in tax cuts. It should not.

You know, I want us to have the right framework here so that you can go back home and do your job. I've done everything I could and Secretary Riley's done everything he could to devise Goals 2000 so that we would really have a partnership. We'd say, here are some resources, here are the goals, here's what we know, you decide how to implement. We want more responsibility for principals and teachers and parents at the grassroots level. We want less control of education in Washington. We have done a lot in the legislation that we have passed to reduce the degree of Federal control and rule-making below that which previous administrations imposed. But we don't want to walk away from the kids and the future of this country.

I want to just mention one other thing. I want to thank Secretary Riley again for taking the lead in creating the National Family Involvement Partnership for Learning. It includes many members of the private sector, more than 100 organizations, including the PTA. He's been proposing seven basic steps for all parents to take. And I like them so much that I want to repeat them for every parent now here at the PTA meeting, because if these things are not done, then our efforts won't succeed. And if these things are done, then our efforts here become even more important to support the parents who are doing them: find more time to spend with your children; read with them; set high expectations for them; take away the remote control on school nights; check their homework; check their grades; set a good example; and talk directly to your children, especially to your teenagers, about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and the values you want them

to have. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. That's about as good as it gets. *[Applause]*

Let me say again in closing my remarks, I am doing my best to work in good faith with this new Congress. There are deep trends going on here which can make this a positive time if we stop posturing and put our people first. We do have to change the way Government works. We need dramatic reform in the Government, and we are working hard to get it.

But what is the purpose of all this? The purpose of all this is the same purpose that you have. To elevate the potential of the American people to make the most of their own lives, to keep the American dream alive, and to guarantee a future for their children. So go up there on Capitol Hill and remind everybody that we need to work together, tone down the rhetoric, and put the kids of this country and our future first.

Thank you, and God bless you.

*[At this point, Kathryn Whitfill, National PTA president, thanked the President for his support and introduced a participant who voiced her concern that the Department of Education would be eliminated due to Federal budget cuts.]*

**The President.** Well, for one thing, you have to ask yourself, why would they do this? First of all, there's a burden—why would you do it? And there are only two reasons to do it, to save money or because you think it's doing bad things or it's useless. And I noticed the other day that the majority leader of the Senate said that it was one of those departments that had done more harm than good.

Now, most of the time it's been in existence the Department of Education has been under control of Republican Secretaries of Education. Maybe they did do more harm than good—*[laughter]*—I hadn't really thought so until he said it. But maybe we need to reexamine that. But Secretary Riley has not done more harm than good. He's done more good than harm by a good, long ways.

And I think that it's just sort of fashionable now. I think the truth is that there have been big commitments made in terms of tax cuts, mostly for upper income people, and big commitments made in other areas. And so

they are looking for ways to save money. But this is not a good place. This is not the right thing to do. And we have worked very hard to have what I consider to be the appropriate level of partnership.

Now, on the block grant issue, generally, let me just say I'm not against all block grants. I strongly supported the community development block grant, for example, which the States get and which bigger cities get, and then they get to decide how they're going to use it to develop the economy and make reports on an annual basis to Federal Government. I think that's fine.

We supported in the crime bill last year more block granting, more flexibility to States and localities in prevention on crime and crime prevention programs because programs that work in one community may not work in another. They know what works best there. We've now given 26 States waivers from Federal rules to implement welfare reforms in their own States, because they know more about it.

But let's not kid ourselves, the school lunch program was proposed for block granting just to save the money, because it works the way it is. And we've made some significant improvements in the school lunch program. Last year, with your support, as you know, we got the nutritional standards up; we made some changes. The only reason it was proposed for block granting is because block grants are in; they're fashionable; they're a la mode today. And that's the way they could save some money.

If you add all this money up, it's just not very much money in this big Federal budget. And you could argue that we should be doing much more for education, but I think it's very hard to argue that we should be spending less.

*[A participant asked how the PTA could become more involved in efforts to make schools in high-crime areas safer.]*

**The President.** Well, I think the first thing I would say about that is that in the absence of security, not much learning is going to occur. You know that. We know that there are thousands of children who stay home from school every day because they are afraid of what might happen to them in school. We

see constantly examples of violence both in school buildings and then in the near vicinity of schools.

Now, what we tried to do with the safe and drug-free schools act, because there was violence in the schools and in the perimeter, is to provide some funds for things like security devices, metal detectors, things like that, but also more enforcement officers in the outside of school. Then I think you must have—the PTA and all the other committed groups in the country that care about the schools, but especially the PTA, has to work with every school district to make sure that there really is a functioning security policy.

You know, there are schools that are very safe environments in very high-crime areas in this country. So it's simply not true that there are no schools in high-crime areas that are safe. There are schools that are quite safe in very high-crime areas because of the security policies they have and because of the leadership and the discipline and the organization of resources that have been adopted and because they've gotten a lot of parental help often.

And so my recommendation is that you identify the schools that you think have done the best job in the most difficult circumstances, figure out what they did, and make sure every PTA chapter in the country has access to that knowledge, and then if we can get these funds and help out there, that you spend them in a way that will maximize the security in the schools in your area.

It's a huge deal, and there's no way—this is the kind of partnership we need. I mean, there's no way in the world the Federal Government can tell anybody how they should secure one, two, or three schools, because they all have different circumstances.

*[A participant asked what State and local school officials could do to help protect the School-to-Work initiative from future budget cuts.]*

**The President.** Well, the Federal School-to-Work initiative essentially tries to build on the work that's being done in States now. When I ran for President, I was fond of talking about the fact that we were the only advanced country in the world that had no real system for dealing with all the young people

who finished high school but didn't go on to 4-year colleges; and that, while most jobs in the 21st century would not require 4-year college degrees, most jobs would require at least 2 years of some sort of education and training after high school. And we already saw in the difference between the '80 and the '90 census what's happening to the earnings of people who don't have post-high school education and training.

Therefore, in terms of the long-term stability of a middle class lifestyle in America, that is, the idea that if you work harder and smarter, you might actually do a little better year in and year out, this School-to-Work system, the idea of putting in to some sort of apprenticeship development system in America, may be the most significant thing we can do to raise incomes. And so what our system does is to provide funds to States to help to build their own systems according to the best information we have and to build on the systems that States are working on.

And you're right. I did a lot of work on this at home because I became so alarmed, even as we got the college-going rate up, that, though we increased it quite a lot, there are all these people out there that were still just cut loose after high school. And we have to put an end to that. The best way to protect that program here is to—for every State to aggressively get with the Department of Education and begin to participate as quickly as possible.

That's the same thing with the Goals 2000. Secretary Riley's probably going to talk about this tomorrow, but I think we're on track for over 40 States to be involved in that pretty soon. And so the more States get involved, the more people get involved at the local level, the more it's Democrats and Republicans and independents, it's not a political deal, it's education, the more likely we are to continue to go forward with this.

*[A participant asked how future cuts in entitlement programs could be prevented.]*

**The President.** Well, I think, first of all, it's important for me to point out to all of you, if you talk about the entitlements, that an entitlement—let me say, an entitlement is a program in which there is no predetermined amount of money to be spent. That

is, if you need it under certain circumstances, the money will flow. A nonentitlement is a program where the Congress appropriates a certain amount of money every year and you spend that and it runs out and you don't spend anymore.

Entitlements basically fall into three categories. One is—the best example is agricultural entitlements, where the farm programs are set up like that because the farm economy will change from year to year, you know, based on not only weather conditions and crop conditions in the United States, but all around the world. And it's necessary to sort of even out the farming cycle.

The other programs, and by far the biggest entitlements today, are Medicare and Medicaid, the medical programs. And the main problem with the Federal budget today is not discretionary spending and education, is not defense spending—both discretionary spending and defense spending have been going down for the first time in 25 years—it's entitlements in health care, health care costs going up by more than the rate of inflation, and the accumulated interest payments on the debt run up between 1981 and 1993, when I took office. That's basically what the big problem is with the budget.

The other entitlements are entitlements basically for poor people, generally. And except for Medicaid, they, by and large, have not kept up with inflation, but they do provide a safety net. So if there is going to be a move away from those entitlements, the burden is on those who would move away to say, how are you going to care for these poor children?

Now, I like the Women, Infants and Children program; I like the school lunch program. I think these programs have worked pretty well for us over time. And we have an interest, all of us do, in not going back to the days when children were basically living in very brutal conditions. And I think there is a national interest in the welfare of the children.

I'm all for having the States have more flexibility about how to do these things, but I think there is a national interest in helping States to keep a floor under the lives of our children. Not every State is as wealthy as every other State. Not every State has the

same priorities. So, having a system that uniformly says we ought to have a quality of life for our poor children, that we believe that all of our children ought to have a chance to get to the starting line is pretty important.

What does the first education goal say?

**Audience members.** Ready to learn.

**The President.** Yes. Every kid ought to show up ready to learn, right? Not just intellectually but physically able to learn. My argument is, if I were making your strategy, I would say that we represent the PTA, and our schools can't succeed if, by the time our kids show up for school, their deprivations have already been so great that they will never overcome them, and that the rest of us will pay a whole lot more in tax money and social misery later on down the road if we back away from our obligation to get these kids to school ready to learn.

[Ms. Whitfill thanked the President for participating and presented him with a paper-weight.]

**The President.** Thank you very much. Thank you. Bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. at the Washington Renaissance Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Essie Middleton, president of the Arkansas PTA and member of the National PTA Board of Directors.

### **Statement on the Nomination of Lt. Gen. Charles C. Krulak To Be Commandant of the Marine Corps** *March 14, 1995*

I am pleased to nominate Lt. Gen. Charles C. Krulak, U.S. Marine Corps, for appointment to the grade of general and as Commandant of the Marine Corps, succeeding Gen. Carl E. Mundy, Jr., who is retiring.

I have asked the Secretary of the Navy to announce my decision today in ceremonies at Iwo Jima commemorating the 50th anniversary of the battle.

General Krulak currently serves as Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific and Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force Pacific. In this capacity, he is responsible for Marine Corps units and activities throughout the Pacific theater. During his

distinguished career, General Krulak served two command tours in Vietnam, oversaw the Marine Corps logistic efforts during Desert Storm, and was responsible for significant and innovative changes in military doctrine and organization. He brings to the job of Commandant a dynamic vision of the Marine Corps' future, a wealth of experience, and a highly effective leadership and managerial style.

General Krulak assumes the post of Commandant of the Marine Corps at an important time in the U.S. Marine Corps' history. I will depend on him to continue General Mundy's superb efforts in ensuring that the Marine Corps remains fully ready and able in carrying out its important responsibilities under our national security strategy.

### **Statement on Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros** *March 14, 1995*

Henry Cisneros' service as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development has been outstanding, and I know him to be a man of integrity and character. The Attorney General has determined that the facts warrant the appointment of an independent counsel to inquire into a question she believes is a "close and difficult factual and legal issue."

Secretary Cisneros is a good man and an effective public servant. He says he regrets any mistakes he has made. So do I. But that does not outweigh the excellent work he has been doing and will do as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. I look forward to his continued valuable service.

### **Proclamation 6777—National Day of Prayer, 1995** *March 14, 1995*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

Our Nation was built on the steadfast foundation of the prayers of our ancestors. In times of blessing and crisis, stability and change, thanksgiving and repentance, ap-